STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CLD COMMUNITY

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by
Clementina Gutiérrez Olmos

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Advisor: Dr. Michelle Plaisance

Abstract

The TESOL International Association (2018) emphasizes advocacy as the central role of the English language teacher, which has spread to content and grade-level teachers because of the rising number of ELLs in the United States. However, according to Peregoy and Boyle (2005), there is a lack of trained personnel that understand ELLs' needs. In fact, the Center for American Progress (2012) affirmed that since there is no specific required coursework related to the needs of ELLs for content and grade-level teachers, the knowledge and skills required do not always reach school personnel who report feeling unprepared to meet the needs of ELLs. Thus, this project entails research on strategies for teachers to address ELLs' needs and strategies to communicate and establish partnerships with the culturally and linguistically diverse community. This series of workshops strives to encourage teachers to avoid being afraid of not speaking the same language as the CLD community. It is expected that by the end of this series of workshops, teachers are better prepared to teach, establish communication, and develop partnerships with ELLs and their families, which would be a starting point for a better understanding and sensitivity towards students coming from different backgrounds which is vital to academic success.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Communication with parents is of paramount importance to students' success. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged teachers to find new ways to communicate with students, which played a major role while students were learning from home. The Office for Civil Rights (2021) affirmed that English language learners (ELLs) are among the hardest hit academically by the pandemic; not only did language barriers affect the students' success, but the families' dependance on overwhelmed schools that were trying to make online learning accessible to them.

Teachers' and parents' frustration portrayed the necessity for better communication on social media. The office for Civil Rights (2012) affirmed that districts with fewer resources reported an increase in failing marks given to ELLs. As a part of the teaching community, I gave passing grades to all those students who I tried to contact but did not communicate with; this was a county mandate so the schools would not leave any children behind because of external issues they did not have control over.

The way schools communicate and establish partnerships with parents affects their involvement in their children's education, which is also affected by the limited background some school communities have because of their language needs, cultural background, expectations, and their practices to educate their children, not to mention the lack of teachers prepared to support ELLs. Therefore, during these times of uncertainty, ELLs needed support more than ever, but unfortunately, many educational institutions struggled to provide what they needed.

According to Van Velsor and Orozco (2007), involvement requires a two-way process where educators seek input from the students' communities and embrace it, which would include taking action. To create and nurture relationships with parents and students, Epstein (1995) developed six types of parental involvement that assist educators in developing school and family partnership programs with an emphasis on the following: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Collaboration with the community is one of the six principles for exemplary teaching of English learners, and it is vital for understanding students' backgrounds, especially those that affect language development (Short et al., 2018).

Shiffman (2019) asserted that immigrant parents struggle to be heard, and school's communication and expectations are challenging. However, parents can benefit from information on a systematic basis, which should start by establishing smooth communication among teachers. Pedagogy, cultural skills, knowledge, and effective communication with ELLs are important to engage with ELLs and their families. However, not all teachers have received proper preparation to teach ELLs. Peregoy and Boyle (2005) pointed to the lack of trained personnel that understand ELLs' needs and affirmed that teachers with more knowledge about the needs of ESL students can definitely adjust better to the different culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) programs offered by the school districts.

This thesis is based on advocacy and on the sixth principle of teaching ELLs, which is based on engaging with a community of practice. Classroom teachers, language specialists, parents, administrators, among other participants are responsible for fulfilling their roles. However, having a system in place is important for schools to provide information about those roles to parents and students. As a result, this project aims to give teachers different tools to

reach the CLD community more effectively. To do that, I have designed a series of workshops to help teachers develop and nurture language partnerships that are critical to student achievement.

The first workshop informs and strives to make teachers aware of best practices to ensure ELLs' success. It is important to target the lack of trained personnel to understand ELLs' needs, and the objective is that teachers emerge better prepared to work with the CLD community. The benefits of this workshop include integrating more culturally compatible learning activities to the teacher's instruction so that students bring culture, language, and life experiences into the classroom, which will help them connect what they are learning with the world around them.

In the second workshop, teachers explore in more detail how schools communicate with the CLD community by helping them be aware of how parents feel when using different ways of communication and how overwhelming this can be. In addition, this workshop shares ideas on how to create effective ways of communication to nurture partnerships with the community.

The third workshop is a follow-up directly related to the previous workshops. This final stage provides opportunities for teachers to share their experiences and analyze how well communication and partnerships are working. In addition, different ways of getting parental input is included so that teachers and administrators can make adjustments to their work.

Besides showing the benefits of establishing partnerships, this project strives to encourage teachers to avoid being afraid of not speaking the same language the CLD community speaks. In most cases, there are different choices to communicate with the CLD community. Knowledge and sensitivity towards students coming from different backgrounds can lead to excellent opportunities to establish rapport in the classroom, which is vital to academic success

Chapter 2: Literature Review

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), there are about 4.9 million ELLs in schools throughout the USA. This number represents about 10% of students enrolled in public schools. ELLs come from different backgrounds that bring along diverse strengths, needs, and challenges. Therefore, their instruction needs to be modified accordingly to ensure their success. Such a diverse group of students faces challenges not only to learn academic content but also to develop English proficiency alongside. Though most mainstream teachers are experts at what they teach, research shows that they are not fully prepared to teach ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012). The National Center for Educational Statistics reported that most teachers are not prepared to teach ELLs. In fact, out of 64% of teachers who reported having English Language learners in their classrooms, only 10% have a major, minor, or certification in ESL.

This lack of preparation is also due to inconsistencies in the should-knows about teaching ELLs. For instance, the Center for American Progress (2012) affirmed that since there is no specific required coursework related to the needs of ELLs for mainstream teachers, the knowledge and skills required do not always reach school personnel. Some inconsistencies mentioned are the specific coursework required in states like Arizona, California, Florida, Pennsylvania, and New York, while 17 states just make a general reference to ELLs needs and about 15 states do not have any requirements (Samson & Collins, 2012). These inconsistencies call for programs, strategies, and best practices to help this population, since the number of ELLs

will continue rising. Additionally, it is essential that teachers are better prepared to communicate with families. Diverse experiential background, strengths and challenges that students face at school are important information to modify instruction. Even if there is no special coursework required to teach ELLs, school personnel should find ways to reach the CLD community. Welcoming students requires empathy and understanding the challenges they face as well as the importance of creating inclusive, informative, and organized environments where parents feel their children can thrive.

In this chapter, I will present research pertaining to the benefits of community partnerships in the ELL classroom. First, a description about the definitions of parental involvement; second, I explore some of the benefits that schools get by creating more partnerships with parents; third, I engage in a discussion of information on the challenges teachers face to reach their linguistically and culturally diverse students as well as how the ELL community struggles to be heard. Finally, some ways of incorporating parental involvement as well as how Epstein's Model for Parental Involvement (Epstein, 1995) is important to build rapport with the ELL community.

What is Parental Involvement?

Epstein (1995) affirmed that teachers and administrators would like families to be a more active part of the learning community; however, many schools do not know how to get the families involved. According to Wright (2009), not knowing 'how to' has created the thought that educators want support from parents without offering opportunities to achieve their goal. The U.S. Department of Education (2013) supports this idea, and it confirms that teachers and administrators receive little training and report feeling unprepared to establish such relationships.

This has caused a variety of barriers to engagement, which affects mainly low-income families and parents of ELLs who have limited English proficiency.

Understanding parental involvement helps establish clear expectations and recognizes shared interests and responsibilities between both groups, which leads to better results that affect children's educational outcomes (Epstein, 1995). Parental involvement is a broad term that covers different ways for parents and teachers to get together and support students. According to Clinton and Hattie (2013), parental involvement includes all situations where parents take part in school activities and in their children's learning process. It goes beyond asking how their children are doing at school, but rather assisting the pupil in the process of learning. It involves effective communication to encourage, mentor, lead, and inspire in genuine ways.

In addition, Epstein (1995) asserted that parental involvement must focus on how schools assist families in creating home environments to support children. The main idea behind this definition is that if children feel cared for and encouraged as students, they are more likely to do their best and remain in school. In addition, if students, parents, and teachers view one another as partners in learning, they will create a caring environment.

Parental involvement is also present in school policies. In fact, the No Child Left Behind policy published in 2003 by the US Department of Education recognized the importance of parent involvement and supported the academic achievement of the disadvantaged, which includes particular attention to economically disadvantaged parents, the disabled, those who have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are part of any racial or ethnic minority. This policy requires Title 1 schools to design and revise strategies for more effective parental involvement because it recognizes the positive effect parent involvement has on academic success (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

Benefits of Parental Involvement in School

As described before, parental involvement is a great opportunity to create welcoming school environments and support learning at home and at school, where parents play important roles. Among these roles, the Department of Education (2013) mentioned parents as supporters of learning, encouragers, lifelong-learning models, and advocates for programs and placement for their children, all of which are actually benefits of having them more involved with their children's education. In addition, parental involvement is associated with positive student achievement, as it reduces absenteeism, improves parents' confidence in their children's education, students get higher grades, have better social skills, and improved behavior (Garcia & Thornton, 2014; Hughes, 2016).

Parental involvement, according to Breiseth et al., (2011), represents a foundation that teachers can use to support what they do at school; for instance, the information about ethnic and linguistic backgrounds or even the situations students come from are useful tools to match students with adequate services and programs. Hughes (2016) added that when school communities work towards a more holistic way to address their students' needs by understanding their educational history, their literacy environment, and their cultural background, they can be more culturally responsive regarding their support systems and instruction approaches. Furthermore, research shows that relationships which support school and student achievement, shared responsibility, trust building, and promote respectful home-school environments, are effective ways to help students thrive (Department of Education, 2004).

Challenges to Incorporate Community Partnerships

Negative perceptions of parental participation by schools constitute challenges to establishing partnerships with parents (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). For instance, the wrong

assumption that Hispanic parents do not participate at school because they are uncaring often stops teachers from trying to reach out (Tinkler, 2002). The same author described this viewpoint as a misread of non-confrontational manners where parents are only trying not to be disrespectful, since teachers are highly respected in Latin American cultures and consider that the expert in education is the teacher who is in charge of transmitting knowledge. Breiseth et al., (2011) added to this statement and explained that thinking that parents are the experts and not the parents result in families not feeling confident to ask questions because this might be considered as questioning the teacher's authority.

Tinkler (2002) asserted that involvement has different meanings depending on parents' cultural backgrounds; for instance, for some parents being involved at school is related to councils and committees while for others it means to be present as classroom aides, and assisting teachers as volunteers. For some others, it means reading to their children, helping with homework, and discussing school with them. Consequently, it is important to explain to ELL parents what involvement is or what it entails to the school, how it is done and ways it benefits the children to minimize misunderstandings (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006).

Perceptions of the role each parent plays in education are not the only barriers. Arias and Morillo-Cambell (2008) included school-based barriers, English proficiency, parents' educational levels, disjunction between school and home culture, and logistical issues.

Concerning school-based barriers, Scribner and Pedroza., (1999) mentioned in Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) that when parents experience a non-welcoming environment, this hinders their involvement since they encounter a system that confuses them and gets them frustrated. In fact, Arias and Morillo-Cambell (2008) added that ELL parents often experience confusion and frustration with an educational system that misunderstands their cultural values

and beliefs. Therefore, a responsive and respectful staff to parents' needs is critical so that the school environment feels inviting and a safe place to establish relationships (Baker, 2016). Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) added that parents who are often dealing with culture shock avoid school involvement because this relationship might be totally new to them. So, a responsive staff could reduce the anxiety, nervousness, confusion, and a sense of being overwhelmed that parents experience when they enter their children's school (Scribner et al., (1999).

Another barrier that affects partnerships is language barriers. According to Tinkler (2002), various reasons cause language barriers, but at schools, it is important to look at the lack of Spanish-speaking administrators to answer questions. The U.S Department of education (2013) added that when there are language barriers, it is hard to establish communication to address issues such as behavior, grades, homework, and diverse concerns happening at school. In fact, Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) asserted that parents who are often dealing with culture shock avoid school involvement because this relationship might be totally new to them.

Educational level is another factor that shows that many ELLs do not have parents who can support them as much as they wish. Kanno and Cromley (2013) reported that parents of ELLs received an average score of 2.19 for their educational level compared to 3.13 for parents of non-ELLs, where 2 demonstrates high school graduation and 3 demonstrate less than two years of college. This information suggests, according to Perez and Morrison (2016), that ELLs' parents are not in a good position to help their children concerning postsecondary education.

Cultural perspectives about the role in education also affect the development of relationships (Houk, 2005). For instance, circumstances such as considering that teachers are the experts and not the parents result in parents not feeling confident to ask questions because this might be considered as questioning the teacher's authority (Breiseth et al., 2011). Last, as many

ELLs are concentrated in low-income areas, it is important to consider that some parents might be burdened by long hours at work, low-income, education, and language barriers. Consequently, they might not know how to support their kids (Tinkler, 2002).

It is important to acknowledge that ELL families care as much as the rest of the families, though there are biases that include thinking that they do not (Quiocho and Daoud, 2006). Orozco (2008) affirmed that immigrant parents are risk takers who are looking for a better life. The author also added that education is the key to success at work and though ELL parents have economic, political and social barriers to face, they see them as temporary because hard work can overcome them.

Ways of Incorporating Parental Involvement (Epstein's Model for Parental Involvement)

Teachers and school administrators are the first source of support to get parents involved with their children's education. However, there is a lack of understanding of techniques and strategies on how to do it and how to communicate with parents. The U.S Department of education (2013) confirms that teachers and administrators receive little training and report feeling unprepared to establish relationships with the CLD community which eventually becomes frustrating. To avoid this, schools have to work towards informing parents of different ways to get involved in their children's education because this helps students ease misunderstanding (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006)

Accordingly, Epstein (1995) proposed six major types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. This approach places the student as the center of attention, and it involves activities to make children feel cared for and encouraged to do their best. Hattie (2012) adds to this idea and mentions that it is important that parents have positive conversations with their children and

set high expectations by showing interest in supporting them at home and at school; family dinners, genuine feedback, and goal setting are some examples parents can easily do. He asserts that encouragement helps to match expectations with actions.

Concerning the first type of involvement, the Center for Real World Learning (2010) asserts that what parents do at home has the greatest impact on students' achievement. This first type of involvement is defined as ways of helping families to have the necessary home conditions and strategies to be actively involved and communicate regularly with their children. Some ideas such as educating parents about child well-being, providing their children with enough sleep, and suggesting home conditions to support learning are some ways to help establish good environments at home (Epstein, 1995)

As for communicating, the same author suggests creating effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about programs and students' progress. This includes conferences, translators, and a regular schedule of sending information to parents. Parent centers are an important component in providing families with resources.

Volunteering involves recruiting and organizing parents who want to help and support the school (Epstein, 1995). Some ideas include school and classroom volunteering to help teachers, administrators and students. Breiseth et al., (2011) recommend drawing activities which consider parents’ skills, hobbies and talents.

Another type of involvement proposed by Epstein is learning at home which provides ideas on how to help with homework and other curriculum related activities. Some ideas are information or skills required in each grade level, homework policy and how to discuss school progress at home, family participation in setting students’ goals and planning for college and

work, schedules and calendar to inform about homework, and activity suggestions to do with children among others.

Decision making has to do with the opportunity for parents to access links to parents' representatives, independence advocacy groups, and active PTAs. Collaborating with the community is the last type of involvement; some practices involve giving information about community health, cultural, recreational, and other programs, or services. Some ideas include service to the community such as recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities where students and parents can participate together.

Certainly, English language learners require support from parents and the teaching community to have access to resources that meet their needs. It is important to understand they may have different perspectives when it relates to the school system and the role they play with their children (Houk, 2005; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Therefore, they will need extra support so that they can understand more about the curriculum and the quality of education their children are receiving. Knowledge and sensitivity towards students coming from different backgrounds can lead to excellent opportunities to establish rapport in the classroom, which is vital to academic success, and it is part of culturally responsive teaching (Krasnoff, 2016).

Conclusions

The increasing number of ELLs suggests that teachers need to be prepared to attend to the needs of this population. Even if teachers are highly qualified to teach their subject matter, research shows the need for training to understand and approach ELLs' needs more efficiently. In addition, parental involvement is one of the most important aspects to encourage students to try and succeed at school, and it has a positive impact on students' education. However, it is necessary that teachers receive training to establish better ways for communication with the

community. By looking for ways to communicate better with parents and providing with more opportunities for involvement, schools and parents can get a better understanding of issues, concerns, needs, or ideas to support the students at home and at school.

In addition, communication with parents is much needed to let parents know how much they matter to schools. Besides, there is information that will help them understand how they can help no matter the language, the level of education, or background experience. By helping these parents with different resources, schools ensure that parents and students feel valued and welcomed; besides, it shows them they have a voice no matter where they come from or the language they speak.

A recommendation by Breiseth (2011), the director of Colorín Colorado, a nation's leading ELL website, is that schools need to focus on small changes that fit their population. This will show students, staff, and families that ELL relationships are a priority. Lastly, it is recommended to provide parents with different opportunities to communicate by giving them different choices to do it (Berzins & López, 2001). Therefore, involvement requires a two-way communication where parents and students will benefit by understanding what schools expect from them.

Chapter 3: Project Design

In this chapter, I explain the rationale behind creating a series of workshops to bring together teachers, administrators, parents, and students so that they can better communicate with each other. To begin, each member of the learning community plays an important role to create a learning environment where ELLs can thrive as they learn academic content and acquire English language proficiency. However, the participants need to become active members of the community so that they can help ELLs succeed. Consequently, schools have an important role to accomplish which consists of informing the community about the different ways to get involved with their children's education. Informing the community and providing better ways to communicate are part of advocating for our students, which according to Short et al., (2018) has spread to all teachers of English learners, and not only to ESL teachers. Additionally, the TESOL International Association (2018) emphasizes advocacy as the central role of the English language teacher, and it also acknowledges that it is a shared responsibility where teachers ensure that students receive an equitable and quality education by taking the necessary actions on their behalf.

The idea of advocating for the CLD community is the first step towards facing the barriers that the CLD community experiences on a daily basis; these barriers include, according to Arias and Morillo-Cambell (2008), English language proficiency, parents' educational levels, misunderstandings caused by differences between school and home culture, school-based barriers, and logistical issues when a school does not have a system in place to interact with

ELLs' parents. Nevertheless, mainstream teachers experience these difficulties as well, and one of their main concerns is that they are not prepared to teach ELLs. Though they might be experts at what they teach, that is not enough to meet their students' needs. For instance, one of the main challenges reported by teachers was communication with students and families (Gandara & Maxwell, 2005). In fact, the U.S Department of education (2013) confirmed that teachers and administrators receive little training and report feeling unprepared to establish relationships with the CLD community which eventually becomes frustrating. Such reports also point at the inability to connect with families and inform them of behavior, grades, homework, and diverse concerns happening at schools.

As previously mentioned, this project is based on advocacy which follows the principles for exemplary teaching of English learners. This principle is associated with creating conditions for language learning, which according to Short et al. (2018)., promotes a welcoming and safe environment for students and families. At the same time, this is associated with engaging and collaborating within a community of practice, which according to the same authors, requires their participants to fulfill their roles to create a sense of community and responsibility in their members. However, for the most part, parents and teachers are not aware of these possible roles they need to fulfill so that ELL can thrive. Consequently, when expectations and roles are not clear to the community, misunderstandings emerge. Therefore, one of the first actions towards bringing together the CLD community is bringing mainstream teachers together and showing them how much they can do to support their ESL learners.

Under these circumstances, this project aims to give teachers different tools to reach the CLD community more efficiently. To do that, I have designed a series of workshops to help

teachers develop and nurture language partnerships, including parental involvement which is critical to student achievement.

As the first goal is to support advocacy, a first workshop has been designed to enlighten teachers about how much they can do to help their language learners. Herrera and Murry (2016) asserted that a component of advocacy in practice is currency; therefore, this first workshop involves the extent as to how teachers are up to date with best practices and accommodations for families and students. For example, giving teachers strategies to scaffold content.

As previously explained, one of the main concerns that teachers report is not being prepared to communicate with the CLD community. For this reason, the second workshop is based on research that shows parental involvement as a great opportunity to create welcoming school environments and support learning at home and at school. Therefore, this second workshop is based on the assumption that everybody can contribute to ELLs' education no matter the language they speak. By establishing better ways to communicate, schools and the community can inform of problems, ideas, concerns, and work on solutions that could be beneficial to everybody.

Along this line of thought, different ways of communicating are key to nurturing partnerships with the community. Besides, communicating better with the community is expected to empower parents and help them with strategies to be involved in their children's education; this is essentially a way to give them a different perspective of how they can contribute to their children's education. Everybody can be an advocate to support the CLD community with the right information. Besides, it is important to follow-up on how teachers and parents are doing. Thus, this third workshop includes evaluation and feedback which is necessary

to adjust if needed. That is why different ways of getting parental input is included, so that teachers and administrators can make adjustments to their work.

Last, by putting these workshops together, more ways of communication are expected to be available to teachers and parents so that they can work together and have the necessary conditions to understand one another. Communication provides more opportunities for involvement, and it is a great way to show how much the CLD community matters to schools. Additionally, it supports the idea that parents' actions at home and positive conversations benefit students' achievement (Hattie, 2012).

Chapter 4: The Project

According to The National Center for Educational Statistics (2018), most mainstream teachers are not prepared to teach ELLs. Since in many states there is no specific required coursework related to the needs of ELLs, the knowledge and skills required do not always reach school personnel. However, it is important that teachers are prepared to teach and reach the CLD community since the number of ELLs is expected to keep growing, and they need personnel who can understand their needs and build upon who they are.

This project aims at enlightening teachers with strategies to support their students in the learning process. It is expected that by the end of the series of workshops, teachers are better prepared to teach, establish communication, and eventually develop partnerships with ELLs' parents and get them more involved in their children's education.

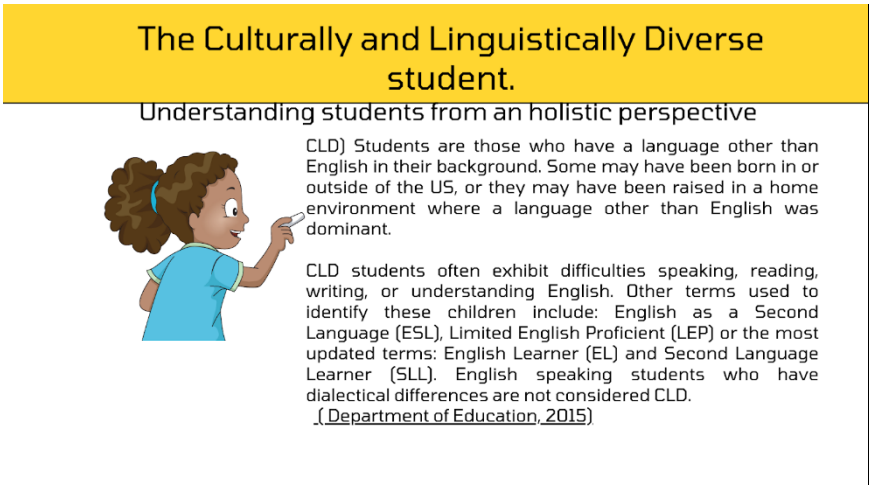
The delivery of the contents and activities is presented through a Canva presentation. Then, the first focus of the workshop is to give information on what teachers can do to address the needs of their students. As the project is based on advocacy, communication is an important part of understanding students; therefore, a second workshop on how to communicate better with parents and ideas on establishing partnerships is presented. Last, a final workshop is presented to analyze what has worked and what needs improvement.

Workshop #1: What You Can Do to Help ELLs

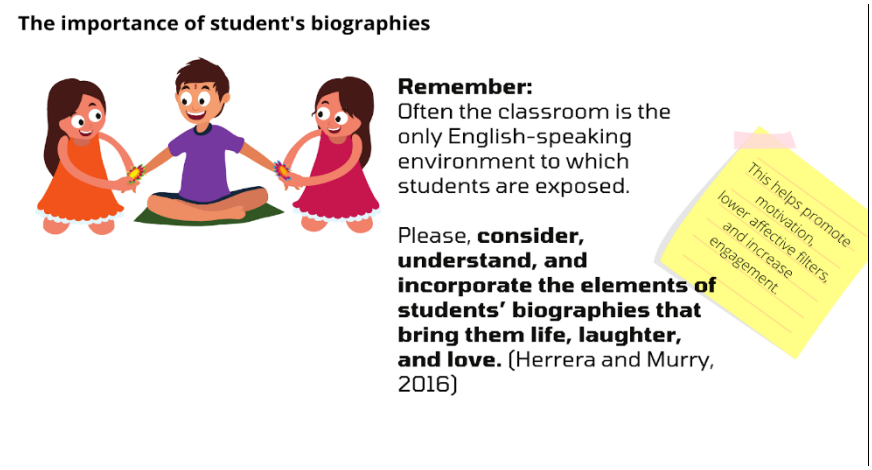
To begin, the first workshop starts by presenting the purpose of the meeting. Thus, by the end of this workshop, teachers will have a set of strategies they may use in the classroom to

support their ELLs. An introduction through an inclusion activity starts the discussion by having teachers observe some pictures and describe how they feel about their experience working with ELLs or simply to introduce themselves and talk about how their day is going which is intended to work as an icebreaker.

Defining the CLD student is the first aspect to explain so that teachers can identify their CLD students along with the importance of their biographies and their background. (See Appendix A, Slide #5 and #6).

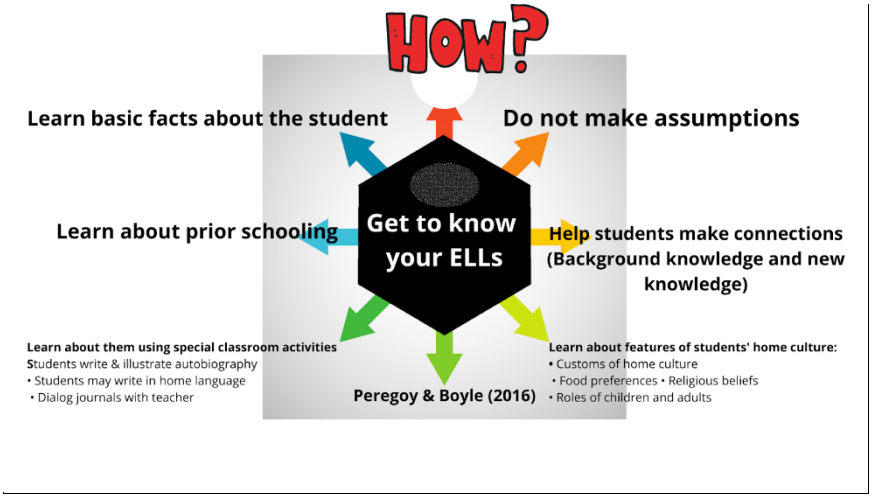


Slide #5



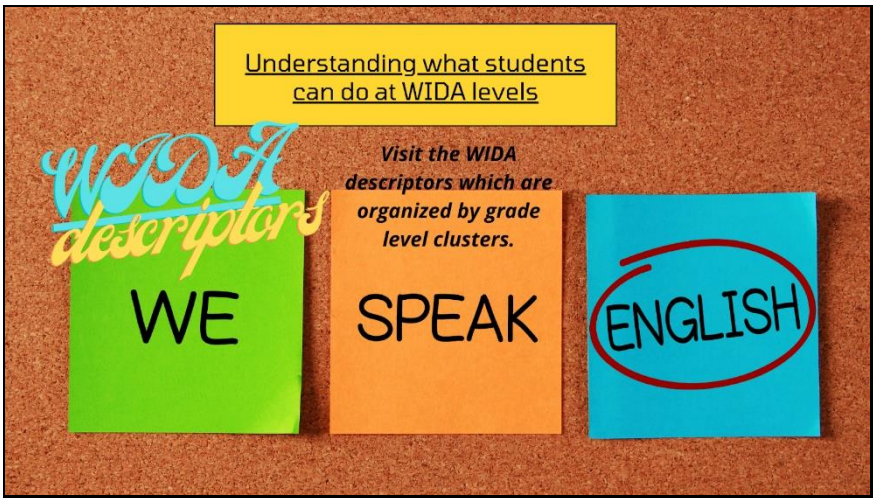
Slide #6

Following the explanation of what a CLD student is and the importance of considering their biographies when planning, there are some ideas on how to do it. This information invites the attendees to familiarize themselves with their students' languages and culture and to build a safe and welcoming environment to enhance their practice (See Appendix A, Slide # 7).



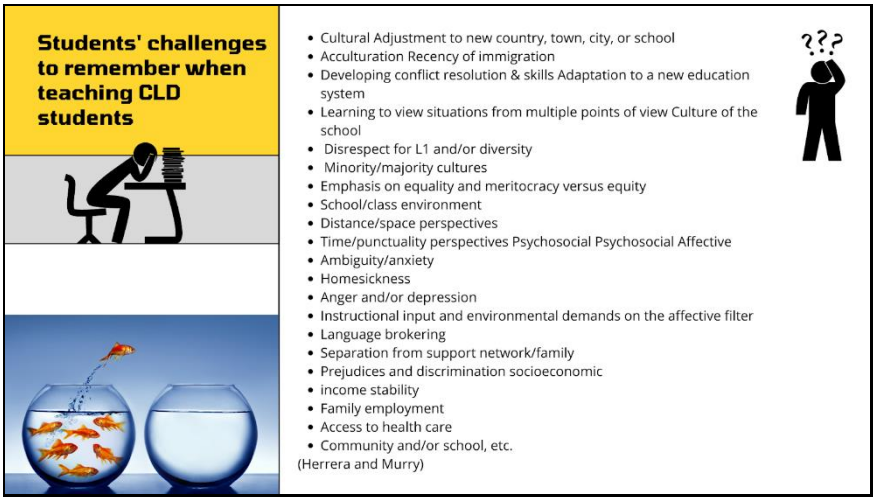
Slide #7

Teachers are also advised to visit the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) descriptors which are organized by levels so that they understand what the students can do across different content areas. This aims at helping educators expand their knowledge of what the process of language learning looks like at different stages (See Appendix A, Slide #8).



Slide #8

Some challenges that students might encounter when adjusting to a new life in the United States are presented to make teachers aware of the struggle some students go through. Besides, teachers need to consider these challenges so that they can help their students in the classroom (Herrera and Murry, 2016). (See Appendix A, Slide 9).

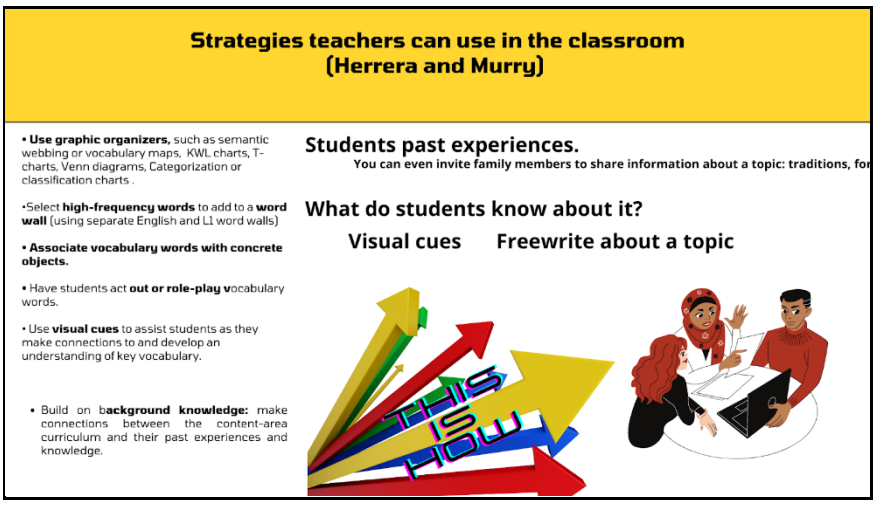


Slide #9

Though the idea of the workshop is to focus on the solutions and not the problem, teachers are encouraged to have high expectations of their students and show this to them. (See Appendix A, Slide #10).

Slide #10

Furthermore, to enlighten teachers on how to help their students in the classrooms using different accommodations, a list of strategies by Herrera and Murry (2016) adds to the information. (See Appendix A, Slide #11, #12, #13, #14).



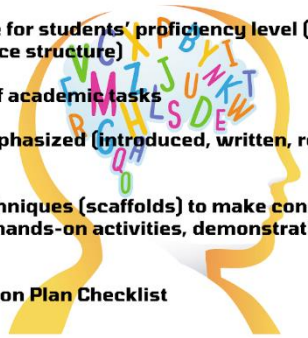
Slide #11

Some strategies teachers can use in the classroom are:

During the lesson

- **Speech appropriate for students' proficiency level (slower rate, enunciation, and simpler sentence structure)**
- **Clear explanation of academic tasks**
- **Key vocabulary emphasized (introduced, written, repeated and highlighted for students)**
- **Use a variety of techniques (scaffolds) to make content concepts clear (e.g., modeling, visuals, hands-on activities, demonstrations, gestures, body language).**

From the SIOP Lesson Plan Checklist



Slide #12

During the lesson

Support content and language objectives clearly while students are on task

-Problem solving
-Predicting
-Organizing
-Summarizing
-Self-monitoring

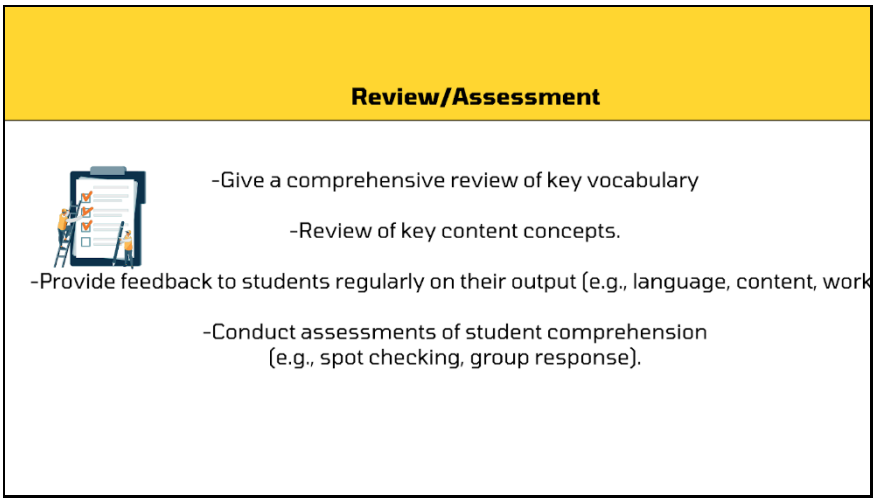
-Use a variety of question types (literal, analytical and interpretive questions)

-Fequent opportunities for interactions and discussion between teacher/student and among students.

-Provide sufficient wait time for student response consistently.

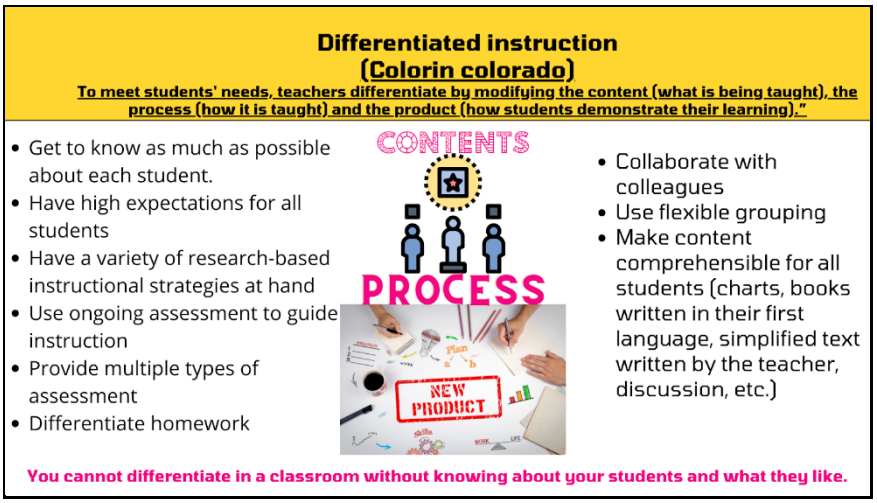
-Give ample opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in LI as needed with aide, peer, or LI text.

Slide #13



Slide #14

The last part of this workshop presents information on how to differentiate instruction for ELLs. It emphasizes the importance of knowing students and how to meet their needs by modifying the content, the process, and how to assess students. (See Appendix A, Slide #15).



Slide #15

After sharing this information with teachers, they are to reflect on how this presentation has helped them better understand their ELLs. Thus, they are encouraged to imagine what the

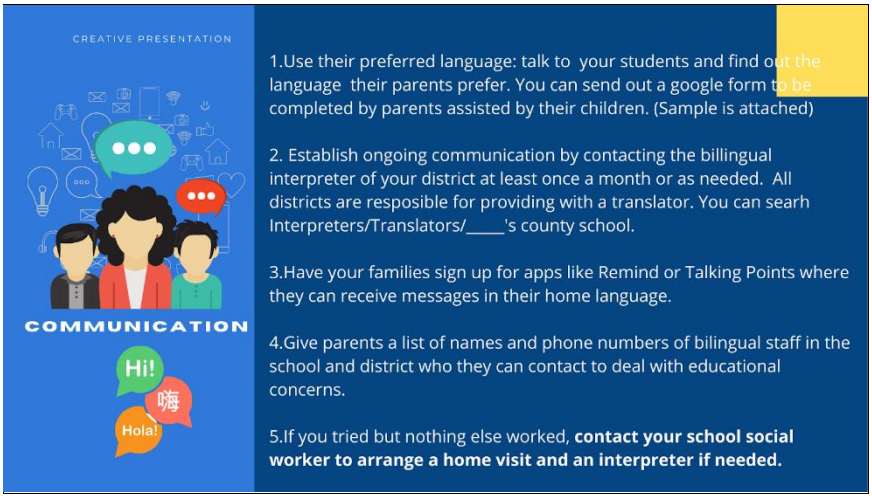
end of the school year will look like for them and for some of their ELLs. Then, they will share their answers at the end of the workshop with a good note: They made it through the school year, and they are feeling content because of the achievements their ELLs had. (See Appendix A, Slide #18)

Slide #18

Workshop #2: Reaching out to Parents of ELLs; Parental Involvement

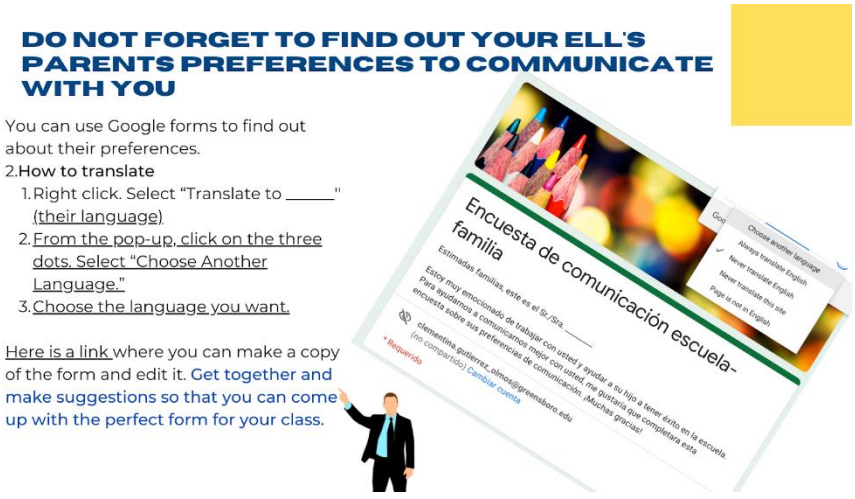
Workshop #2 is an attempt to bring together parents, students, and the school community. According to The U.S. Department of Education (2013), teachers and administrators receive little training and report feeling unprepared to establish such relationships. Therefore, the second workshop aims at helping teachers reach ELLs' parents and try to bring down barriers that affect mainly those who have limited English proficiency.

To begin, the workshop starts with the question 'How do I establish communication with ELLs' parents?' This question is answered at the beginning of the workshop because this is an invitation to start using apps or other ways to include all parents, especially those with language barriers. (See Appendix B, Slide B3).



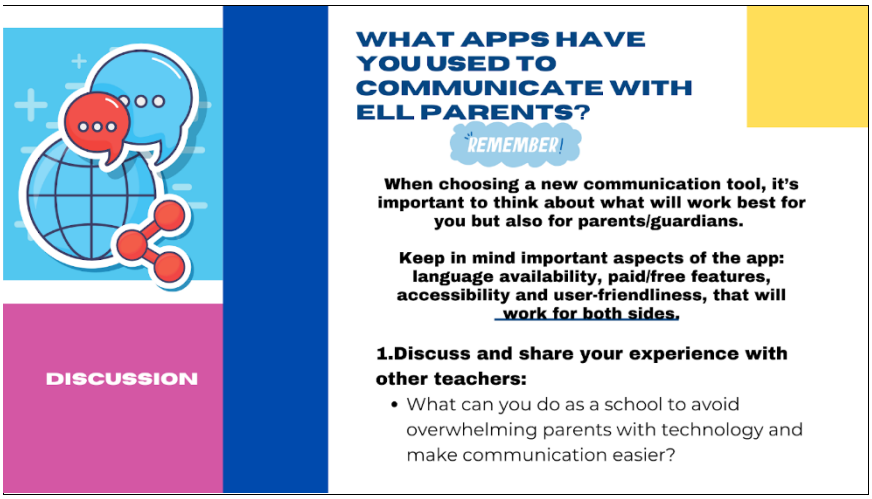
Slide B 3

However, this workshop wants to encourage teachers to consider parents' preferences to communicate with schools and teachers. The reason why a Google form is included is that such a form can be edited according to the teacher's or school's needs (See Appendix B, Image B4. 1). It would be important that teachers could explain to students how to get the form translated to their parents' native language so that they can assist in completing the form or send a note home explaining how to do it.



Slide B 4

The next part of the workshop is a list of internet applications to be used to communicate with parents of ELLs and their advantages: Remind, Talking Points, Class Dojo, etc. The importance of being consistent and avoiding overwhelming parents with different tools is highlighted and explained. Then, participants are encouraged to discuss and share their experience regarding technology to communicate with parents and make it easier and less overwhelming. (See Appendix B, Slide B8).

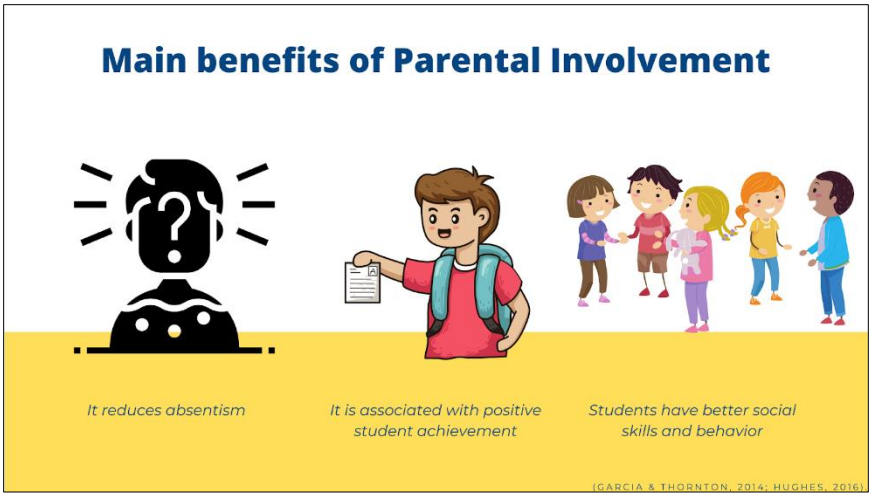


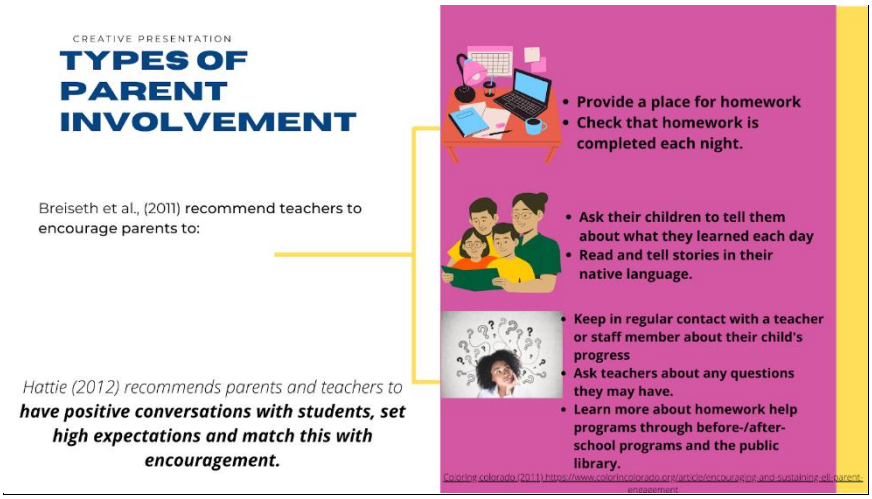
Slide B8

The last part of the workshop is intended for those who want to go deeper into the topic and get parents more involved in their children's education. Thus, the facilitator of the workshop will present the benefits of having learning partnerships (See Appendix B, Slide B9 and B10).

Slide B 9

Parents are encouraged to get involved in their children's education no matter their level of education or native language. Activities such as providing a place for their children to do homework or read stories in their native language are possible suggestions to empower parents with something they could do to support their children. (See Appendix B, Slide B10). This list could be mailed to students' homes or shared with parents through an app to communicate with parents.





Slide B 11

Other ways of parental involvement (Epstein, 1995) are included so that teachers have an idea on how to develop school and family partnerships programs if desired (See Appendix B, slide B12. This requires time, so further information may be needed. However, the reference that includes Epstein's framework is available in the references.

To conclude the workshop, the facilitator will have the participants think about and share their ideas on how they are already supporting family partnerships, any actions they are taking to bring parents together, and some of the things they would like parents to be involved at school and not only at home. This discussion will also give them the opportunity to reflect on the challenges parents and teachers may have when trying to build learning partnerships.

Furthermore, it is expected that teachers work together and think of the creation of ongoing activities to get parents involved at school. Depending on the remaining time, the facilitator may have them create a shared document where they can post ideas and comments so that everybody builds on each other's ideas (See Appendix B, slide B13 and B14).

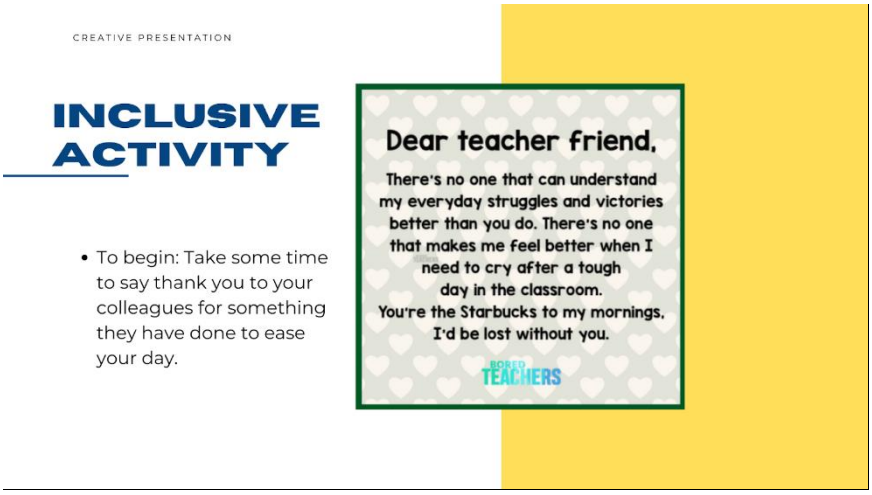
Slide B 13

Slide B 14

Workshop #3: Debriefing; Strategies for Improving Communication and Parental Involvement with the CLD Community

The last workshop starts by presenting the purpose of the reunion, which is to give and receive feedback on how teachers have tried new ways to communicate and establish partnerships with the CLD community. To start the workshop, the facilitator invites the attendees

to participate in an inclusive activity, which is to break the ice and build community (See Appendix C, Slide C3).



Slide C3

Right after the inclusive activity, there are three questions that teachers are invited to discuss: What is something you are doing to better communicate with your CLD community? Did you observe any positive changes in your class? What are some changes you would need to make? (See Appendix C, Slide C4, C5, C6).

In all, this is a short workshop intended to hear from other colleagues so that teachers can have insights on what others are doing. Besides, it is a discussion to encourage them to keep trying since relationships require time to grow, and even small details count to help families support their children's well-being.

In conclusion, these three workshops support one another. The first workshop is mainly designed to support all those teachers who really need help in understanding where ELLs come from and how that can be integrated into their instruction. As time goes by, they will also need more tools to communicate with the CLD community, and that is where the second workshop is

useful. Last, it is always important to get and give feedback on what has worked so far to ensure the success of the three workshops, and that is why the last workshop was created.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

ELLs are a growing population in the United States, and so the number of teachers required to teach them also grows. Apart from ESL teachers, many grade level and content teachers are being challenged by the rising number of ELLs in their classrooms because of their limited preparation to teach CLD students.

This first came to my attention when I started working as a Spanish teacher in the USA. Most of my colleagues did not know how to communicate with those kids who were struggling in their classes. Teachers would get frustrated when they saw their students not working in class. As I had some of those students in my Spanish class, I realized they enjoyed being in a place where they felt comfortable and could understand what was being said. The times I talked to them about their work in other classes, those students expressed difficulty in understanding what to do and this would translate to playing, sleeping, or any other behavior issue. In fact, they were calling for teachers who could differentiate instruction and give them the attention they needed. That is why this project is based on advocacy, which is one of the major roles of the ESL teachers. With the rising number of ELLs, the TESOL International Association (2018) recognizes advocacy as a responsibility for all teachers. Thus, it is important that all teachers are better equipped to help and interact with ELLs. Gaining academic knowledge while learning a new language is an ELL task that needs to be strongly supported by teachers.

For this reason, I created this series of workshops that are addressed to grade-level and content teachers who would benefit by gaining knowledge in how to address their ELLs' needs

and enhance their instruction. I expect these workshops to offer many strategies for usage in the classroom and make teachers more confident and less frustrated, and eventually to create an inclusive classroom which welcomes students from different backgrounds. Ideally, this will be a classroom with minimal anxiety which is essential for ELLs to thrive.

Apart from targeting the under preparation to teach ELLs, these workshops are an invitation for teachers to take part in professional development related to the CLD community as well as to consider families as assets to their children's education by getting them more involved at school. Family engagement is an opportunity for teachers to work together and offer new ways for parents to take part in their children's education. This practice supports the idea that students who feel cared for and encouraged as students are more likely to do better and remain in school (Epstein, 1995). Education is a team effort, and teachers are not alone, and parents should not feel alone either, but both spheres need support to interact with the third, which is the students.

It is important to acknowledge that ELL families care as much as the rest of the families and that the idea of partnership is a process that takes time and has challenges along the way. However, the potential outcome is worth trying to build relationships to help students get that future those families came to this country for. Therefore, comprehensive and collective communication is essential, and that is why the second and third workshops are all about creating opportunities for collaboration and communication.

I consider this series of workshops to be a starting point in getting to know the CLD community better. Further work is needed to learn to identify biases and work on them so that all teachers can offer a better education. We should start our lesson with no assumptions and help students give the best of themselves. Thus, I believe teachers would benefit from implicit bias

training since the United States is a multicultural country that needs more understanding of other cultures.

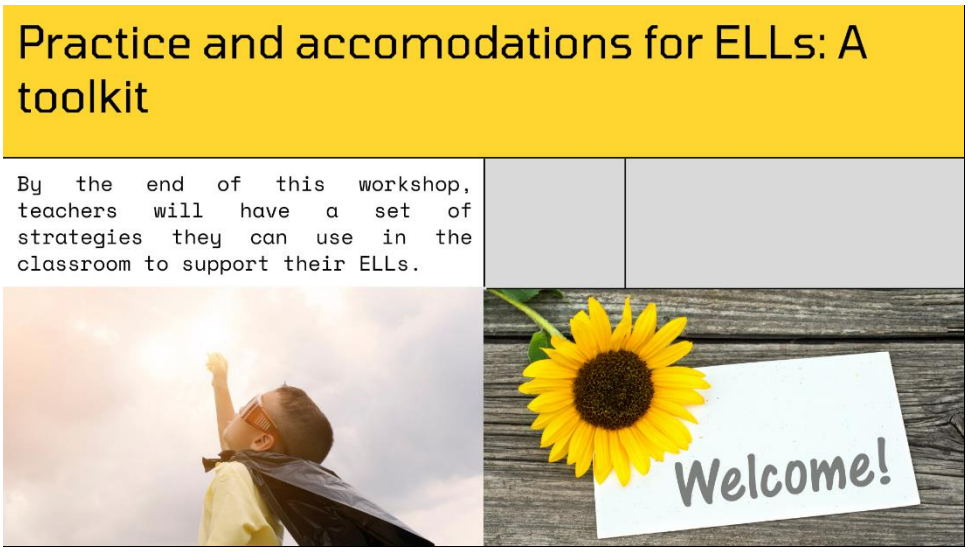
Finally, I hope these workshops are of use to all those teachers who need to improve their instruction and seek a starting point to better interact with the CLD community. I also hope they will be a resource to bring more curiosity towards the need to take advantage of all those professional development courses that, even when not required, are of great importance to meet ELLs' needs.

Appendices

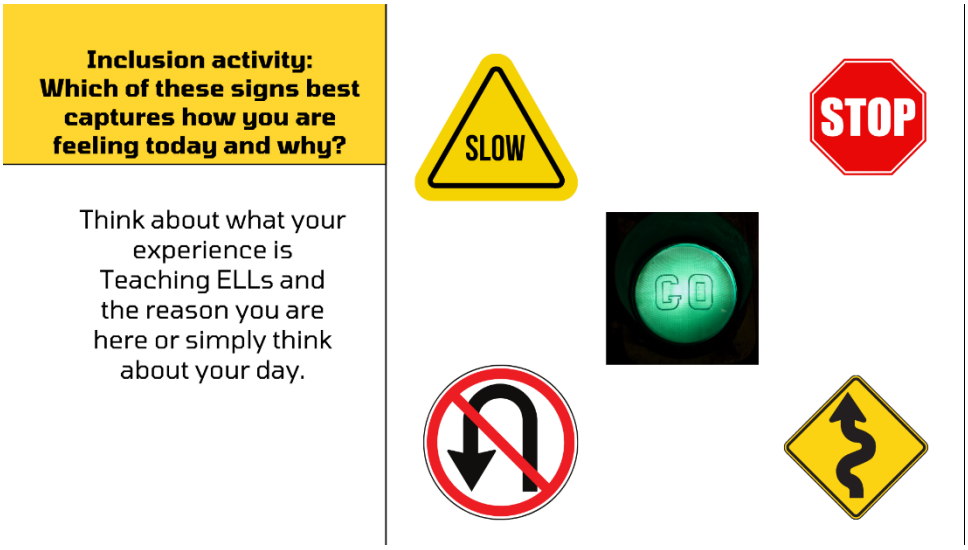
Appendix A: Workshop 1

Slide # 1

Slide # 2



Slide # 3



Slide # 4

The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse student.

Understanding students from an holistic perspective

CLD) Students are those who have a language other than English in their background. Some may have been born in or outside of the US, or they may have been raised in a home environment where a language other than English was dominant.

CLD students often exhibit difficulties speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English. Other terms used to identify these children include: English as a Second Language (ESL), Limited English Proficient (LEP) or the most updated terms: English Learner (EL) and Second Language Learner (SLL). English speaking students who have dialectical differences are not considered CLD.
(Department of Education, 2015)

Slide # 5

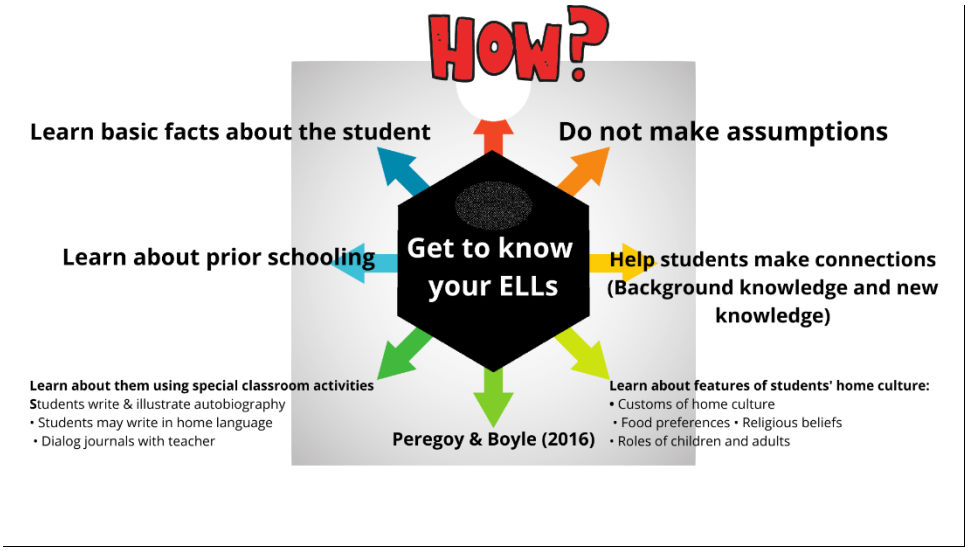
The importance of student's biographies

Remember:
Often the classroom is the only English-speaking environment to which students are exposed.

Please, **consider, understand, and incorporate the elements of students' biographies that bring them life, laughter, and love.** (Herrera and Murry, 2016)

This helps promote motivation, lower affective filters, and increase engagement.

Slide # 6



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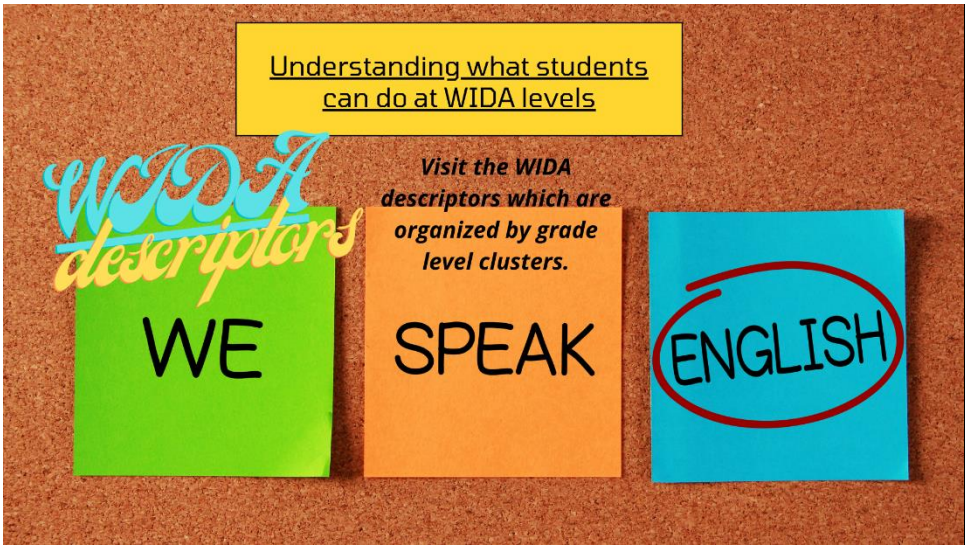

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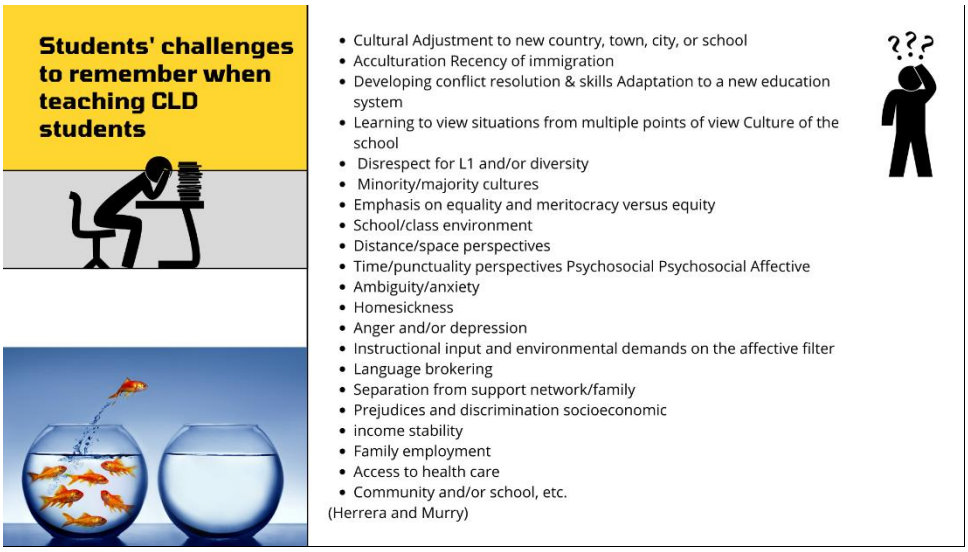

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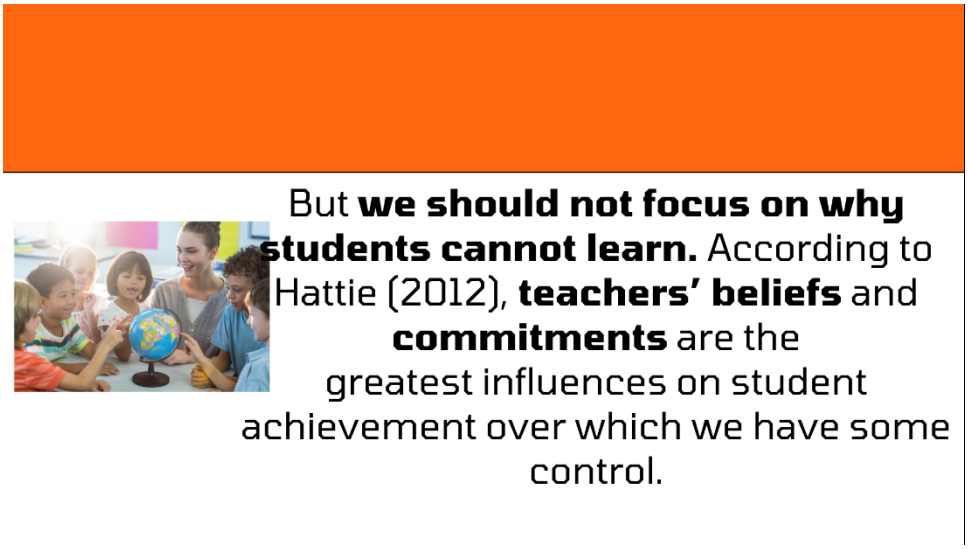

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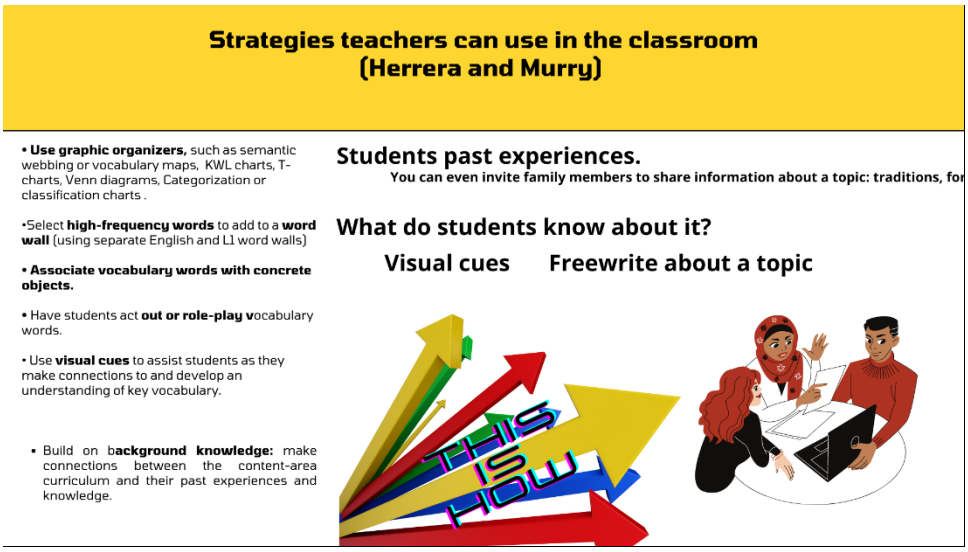

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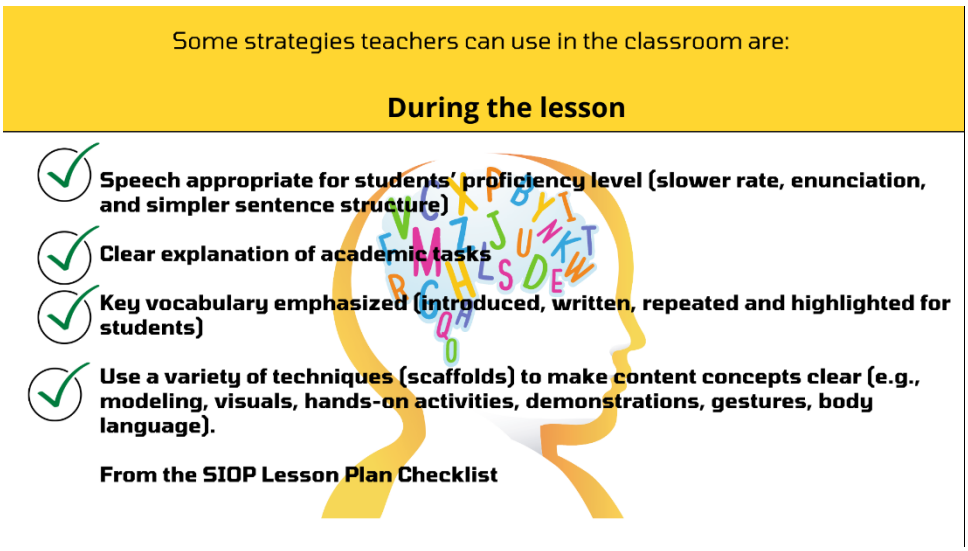


Slide # 12

During the lesson

Support content and language objectives clearly while students are on task

-Problem solving
-Predicting
-Organizing
-Summarizing
-Self-monitoring

-Use a variety of question types (literal, analytical and interpretive questions)

-Fequent opportunities for interactions and discussion between teacher/student and among students.

-Provide sufficient wait time for student response consistently.

-Give ample opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in LI as needed with aide, peer, or LI text.

Slide # 13

Review/Assessment

-Give a comprehensive review of key vocabulary

-Review of key content concepts.

-Provide feedback to students regularly on their output (e.g., language, content, work

-Conduct assessments of student comprehension (e.g., spot checking, group response).

Slide # 14

Differentiated instruction
(Colorin colorado)

To meet students' needs, teachers differentiate by modifying the content (what is being taught), the process (how it is taught) and the product (how students demonstrate their learning)."

- Get to know as much as possible about each student.
- Have high expectations for all students
- Have a variety of research-based instructional strategies at hand
- Use ongoing assessment to guide instruction
- Provide multiple types of assessment
- Differentiate homework

- Collaborate with colleagues
- Use flexible grouping
- Make content comprehensible for all students (charts, books written in their first language, simplified text written by the teacher, discussion, etc.)

You cannot differentiate in a classroom without knowing about your students and what they like.

Slide # 15

If you want to learn more about scaffolding options for Teachers of English Language Learners

visit The GO TO Strategies by Linda New Levine, Laura Lukens, and Betty Ansin Smallwood

Slide # 16

Other scaffolding options for Teachers of English Language Learners

visit **The GO TO Strategies by Linda New Levine, Laura Lukens, and Betty Ansin Smallwood**

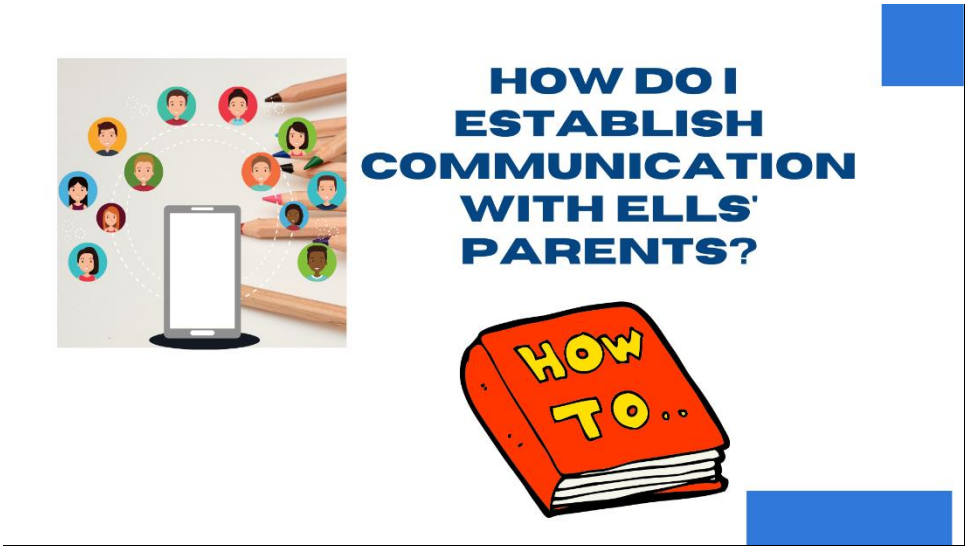
Slide # 17

Closure

Imagine today is a day in June of 2022.
Write about your ELLs and some of the things they accomplished this year and how that makes you feel.
End your school year with a positive note that makes you feel accomplished!

Slide # 18

Appendix B: Workshop 2



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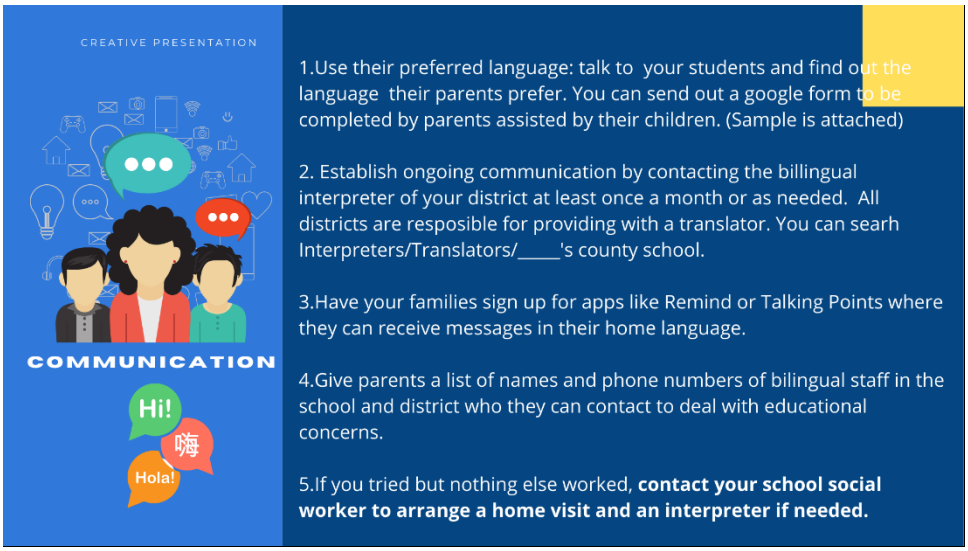


Slide B 3

Slide B 4

Nov. 2021. Family-School Communication Survey

Questions Responses Settings

School-Family Communication Survey

Dear Families, this is Mr./Ms. _____

I am so excited to work with you and help your child succeed at school. To help us communicate better with you, I would like you to complete this survey on your communication preferences. Thank you so much!

Name of parent/guardian * *

Short answer text

Preferred email address

Short answer text

Parent/Guardian telephone number *

Second phone number (optional)

Short answer text

Child's full name *

Short answer text

Relationship to Child *

Short answer text

What is your preferred language for school communications? *

- Spanish
- Chinese
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese
- Arabic
- French
- Korean
- Russian

Other...

How do you prefer to communicate with your child's teacher? *

- Email
- Text message
- Phone call
- In-person meeting
- Online meeting
- Other...

Do you require a translator? *

- Yes
- No

What is your mother language? *

Short answer text

Has your child received English language services in school in the past?

- Yes
- No

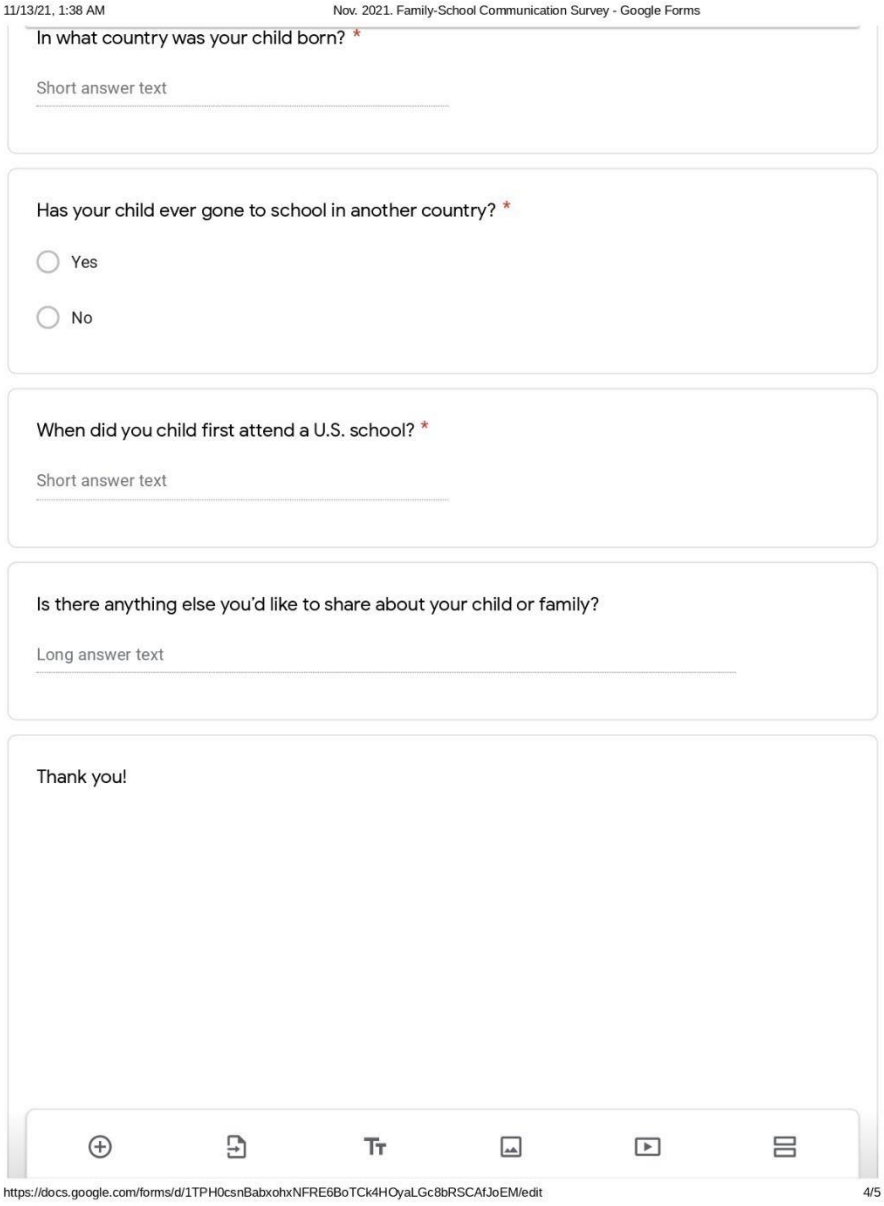
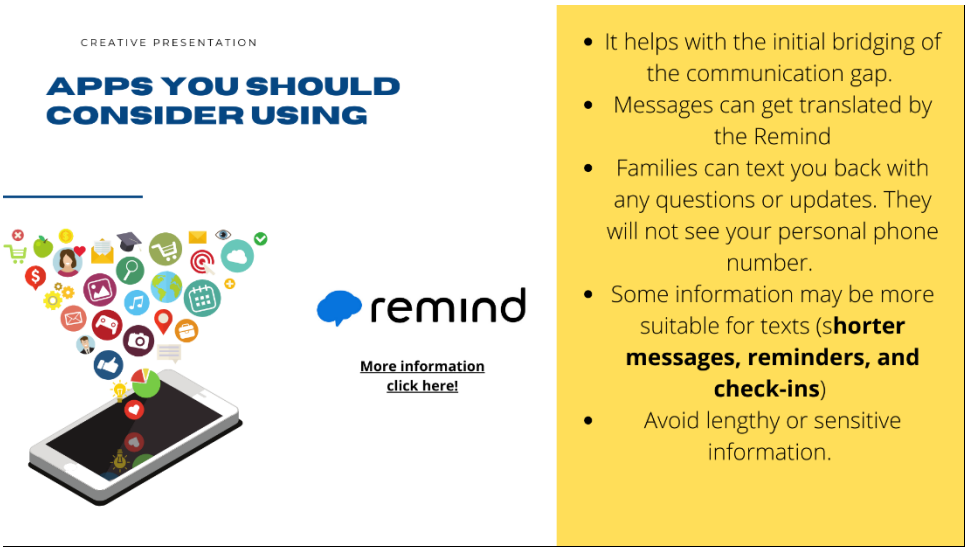


Image B4. 1 Family-School Communication Survey

Slide B 5

Slide B 6



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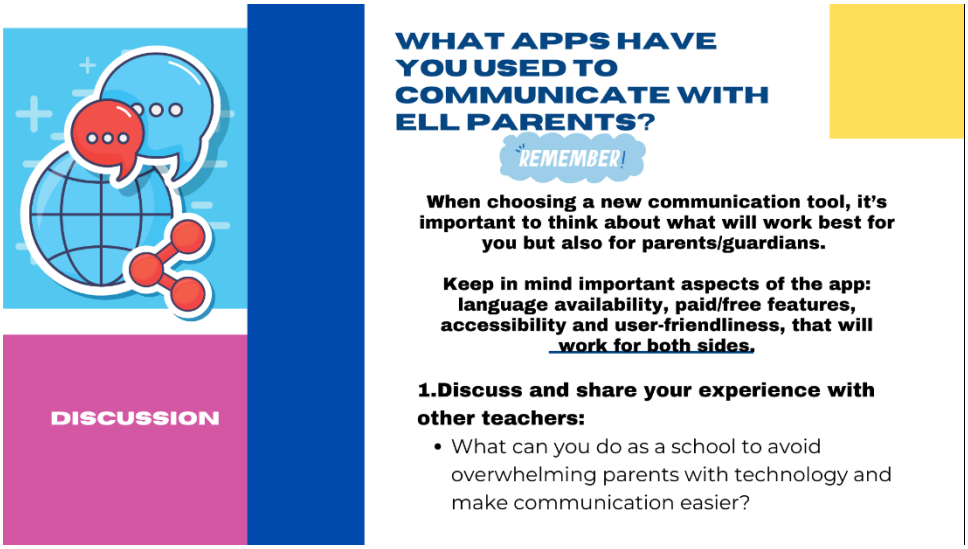

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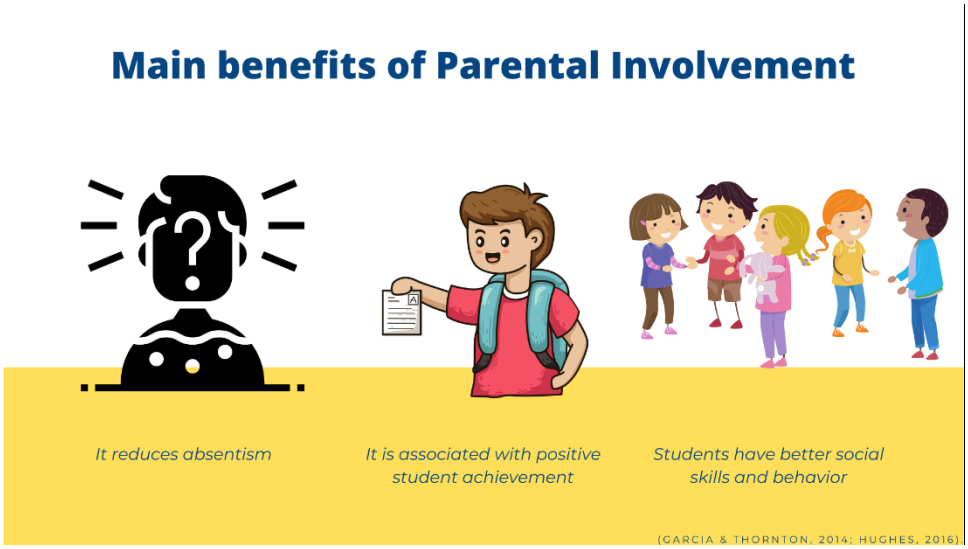

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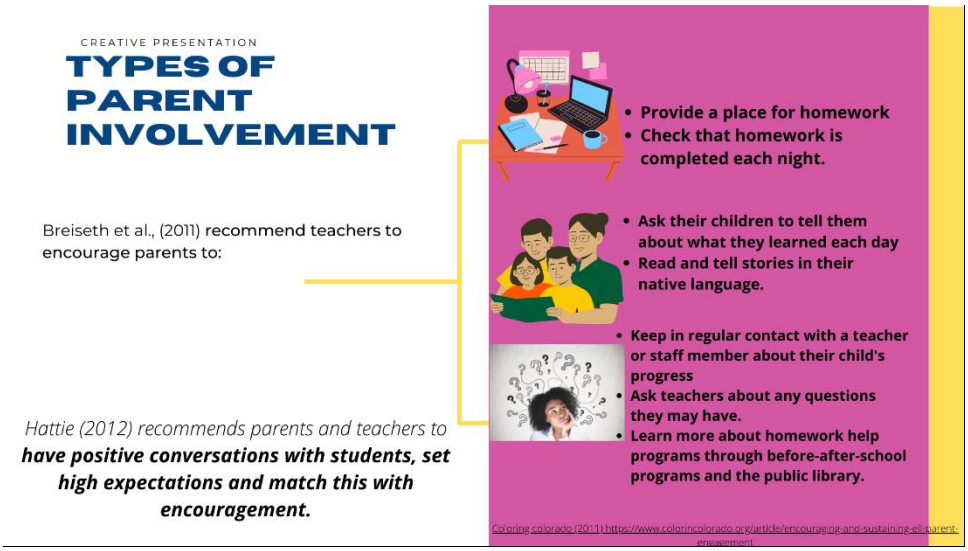


Slide B 11

Slide B 12

TO CONCLUDE: THINK AND SHARE

1. **What are some of the things you are already doing to support family partnerships?**
2. **Have you ever held any school events in the community? Were they successful?**
3. **Mention some things you hope or expect that "involved" parents will do at your school.**
4. **What are some of the challenges parents may have to get involved?**

Slide B 13

TO CONCLUDE: THINK AND SHARE

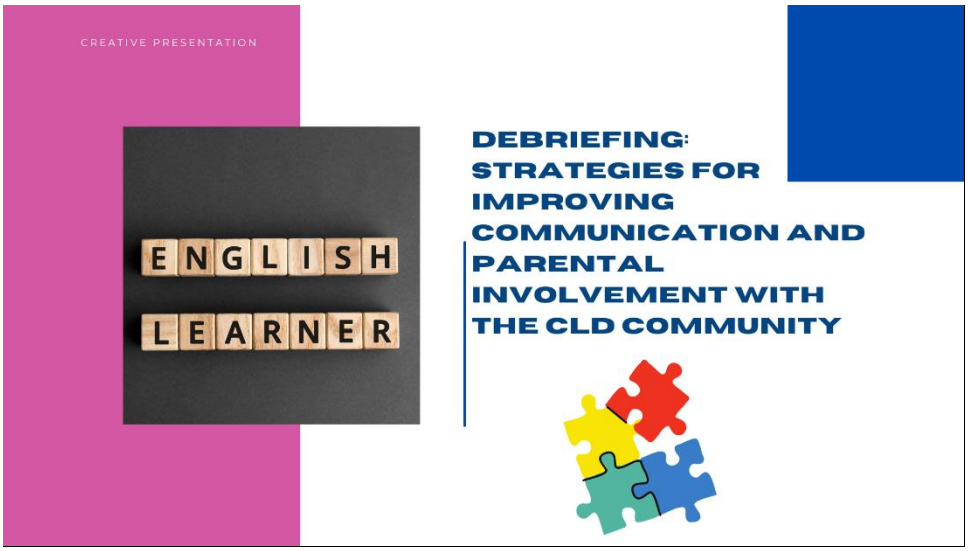
. In teams, come up with an activity or a new strategy that the school or you could do to support ELL family partnerships. It could be the use of an app to communicate better with parents or the creation of ongoing activities to involve parents at school or at home with their children. If there is not enough time during the workshop, you can create a shared document where teams can post their ideas and comments. Then, choose one that would be of use to you and your community.

6. There will be a future workshop where you will have the chance to share your experience.

Slide B 14

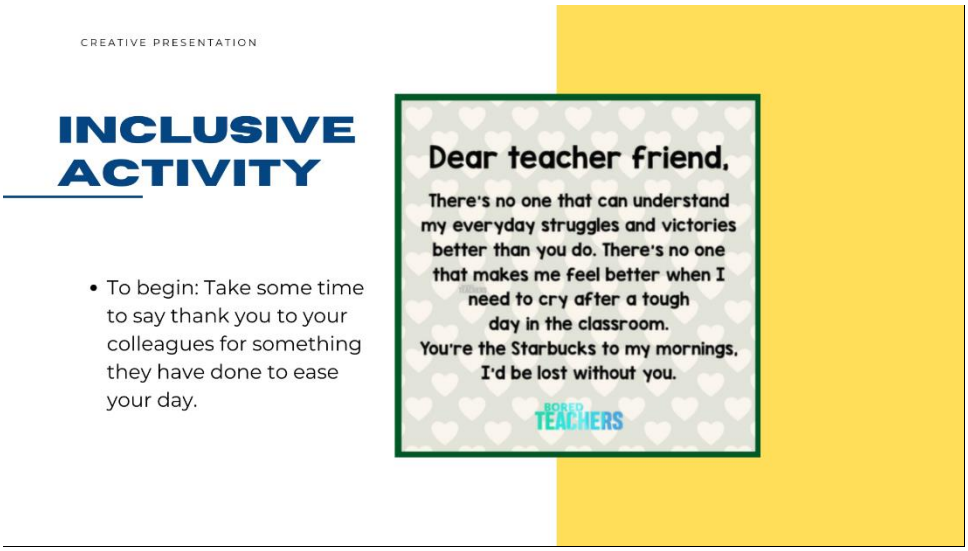
Slide B 15

Appendix C: Workshop 3



Slide C 1

Slide C 2



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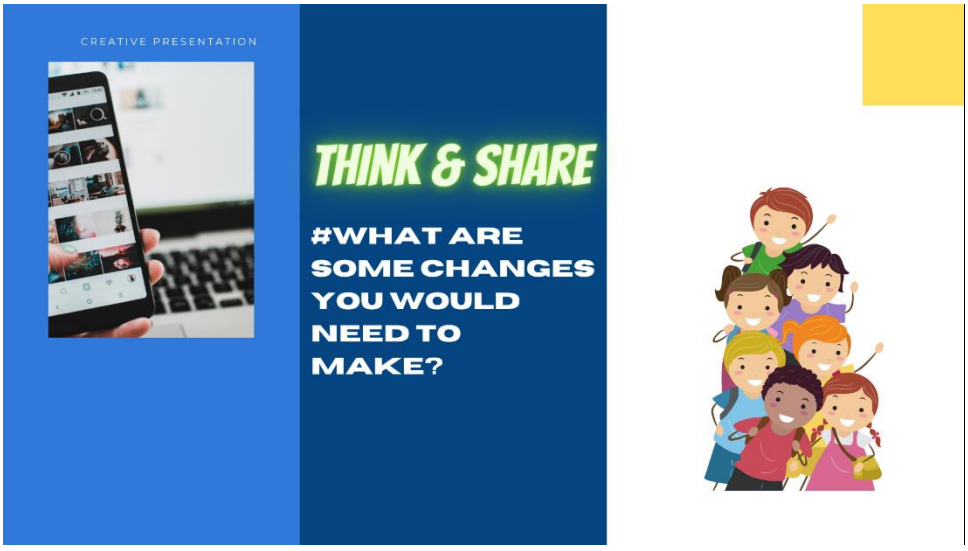
Slide C 4

Slide C 5



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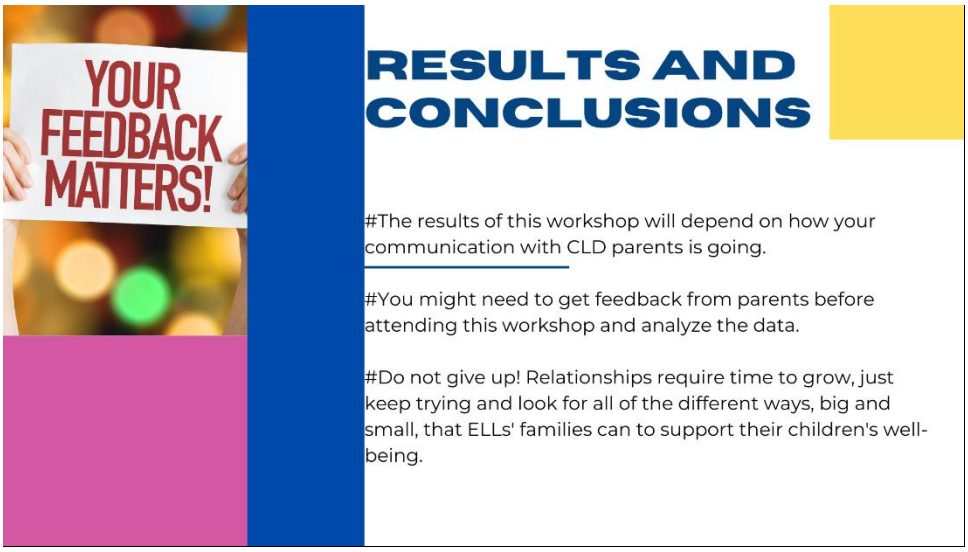

Slide C 7

Slide C

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